



Clean Water Plan

Elected Officials Workshop #1

Event Summary

Overview and purpose

On March 31, 2021, the Clean Water Plan hosted an online briefing for elected officials from throughout the King County Wastewater Treatment Division's service area. This was the first in a series of workshops to inform and engage elected officials on important milestones in the development of the Clean Water Plan. The purpose of this first workshop was to provide information about the background and process for developing the Clean Water Plan, and to begin to gather feedback from elected officials.

Invitations and participation

King County extended invitations to elected officials from throughout WTD's service area. The meeting was open to the public and participants were provided with access to observe.

The following jurisdictions were represented by participants in the workshop:

- City of Auburn
- City of Bothell
- City of Carnation
- City of Duvall
- City of Issaquah
- City of Kent
- City of Kirkland
- Lakehaven Water and Sewer District
- City of Mercer Island
- Northeast Sammamish Sewer and Water District
- City of Normandy Park
- City of Pacific
- City of Redmond
- Ronald Wastewater District
- Sammamish Plateau Water
- Seattle Public Utilities
- Town of Skykomish
- City of Tukwila
- Valley View Sewer District
- Woodinville Water District

The briefing was delivered by a team of King County representatives and facilitated by supporting consultants:

- Christie True, Director, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks
- Mark Isaacson, Director, King County Wastewater Treatment Division

- Sonia-Lynn Abenojar, Clean Water Plan Regional Engagement Project Manager
- Steve Tolzman, Clean Water Plan Program Manager and Planning Project Manager
- Tiffany Knapp, Clean Water Plan Planning Project Manager and Alternate Program Manager
- Rob Greenwood, Ross Strategic, Clean Water Plan Regional Engagement Consultant Team
- Darcy Peth, Ross Strategic, Clean Water Plan Regional Engagement Consultant Team

Format and content

The workshop began with a welcome and land and labor acknowledgement. Rob Greenwood introduced the speakers and facilitators and acknowledged the jurisdictions that were represented on the call.

The content of the briefing adhered to the following agenda:

- Welcome and Land Acknowledgement (Mark Isaacson)
- Purpose of the Workshops (Christie True)
- Agenda Overview and Plan for the Workshop (Rob Greenwood)
- Orientation to the Regional Wastewater System (Sonia-Lynn Abenojar)
- Why the Clean Water Plan (Steve Tolzman)
- Questions and Answers (Ross Strategic)
- Overview of the Planning Process (Tiffany Knapp)
- Community Engagement and Input Received (Sonia-Lynn Abenojar)
- Questions and Answers (Ross Strategic)



Presentation slide illustrating the trends shaping our region's future

The speakers gave an overview of the King County regional wastewater system, including services and programs. They then explained the motivating drivers behind the Clean Water Plan, listing and describing reasons why the Plan is needed.

Speakers provided an overview of the Clean Water Plan process, which includes:

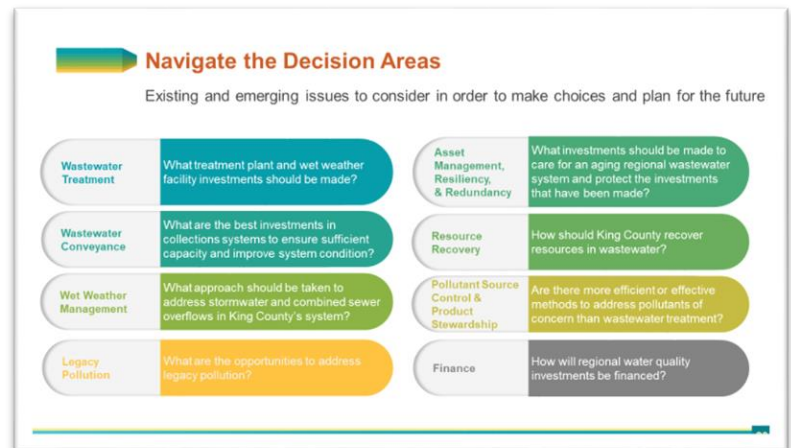
- Decision Areas, which cover existing and emerging issues King County Wastewater Treatment Division needs to consider in order to make choices and plan for the future;
- Actions, which are specific programs or set of projects that address one of the Decision Areas;
- Strategies, which are groups of multiple Actions reflecting complete investment approaches the County could take for water quality and the regional wastewater system.

Speakers explained that the Clean Water Plan team will assemble a preferred Strategy , informed by technical analysis and input from the community and local agencies, for the King County Executive to recommend to the King County Council for consideration.

Speakers then provided a summary of community engagement that has been conducted thus far. This engagement has included community-based organization (CBO) partnerships, an external Advisory Group, focused engagement webinars and workshops, broad (general public) engagement, youth and student engagement, Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC), and tailored engagement for audiences such as tribal governments, regulators, and elected officials. Ongoing engagement includes a community questionnaire, conversations with interested community members, and the distribution of topic sheets that explain specific topic areas related to the Clean Water Plan. There also will continue to be regular briefings to MWPAAC, RWQC, and the King County Council. Upcoming engagement includes a series of Technical Workshops on the Clean Water Plan Actions, continued engagement with the Advisory Group and CBO partners, and engagement around the Strategies.

Key priorities that have emerged from community input include the following:

- Avoid sewer system failures
- Prepare and fight climate change
- Equity
- Increase collaboration
- Prioritize best water quality outcomes
- Maintain effective wastewater workforce
- Keep rates affordable
- Healthy habitats for fish and wildlife
- Protect and restore rivers, lakes, and Puget Sound



Presentation slide explaining key decision areas under review as part of the Clean Water Plan

- Protect public health

Questions and comments

The briefing included two sessions for questions and answers. Elected officials asked several questions, which prompted answers and discussions between participants and presenters. Key highlights of these discussions are summarized below.

- **External expertise:** A participant asked whether King County will hire a third-party cost expert to confirm the anticipated costs of the Plan. Presenters explained that there are national experts on topics related to the Plan, including costing, who are working with the Clean Water Plan team currently; however, there are no current plans to convene, for example, a peer panel on any attributes of the Plan such as an independent review of costs – but that option has not been ruled out as a future possibility, if timed and scoped to be most useful to decision-makers.
- **Federal funding opportunity:** A participant asked whether the recently proposed federal infrastructure plan might provide some funding for the Clean Water Plan. Presenters responded that the White House plan is intended for projects that are shovel-ready in the near term, while many aspects of the Clean Water Plan may not take place until future decades.
- **Costs planning horizon:** A participant asked why the Plan would not examine costs for a full 30-year planning period. Presenters clarified that the Clean Water Plan planning horizon is 40 years, until 2060, and costs will be examined and considered for this full planning period as part of the Plan.
- **Cost of rebuilding existing system:** A participant asked whether the \$20 billion that was noted it would take to recreate the existing wastewater system includes the cost of construction and design, or just materials. Presenters said that yes, those aspects are included in that order of magnitude estimate.
- **Combined sewer overflow (CSO) impacting Duwamish:** A participant asked if there will be a focus on investments in the near-term addressing CSO impacts on the Duwamish. Presenters noted that this is an important concern, and that the King County Executive agrees that the Duwamish is very important to invest in. The planning process will examine different options that will determine what gets invested where and with what timing.
- **Geographic priorities:** A participant asked if a decision has been made on how to prioritize which geographic areas will be impacted first in the Clean Water Plan. Presenters responded that these are very important decisions which will be made as part of the planning process, as informed by input including from this group.
- **Fourth treatment plant:** A participant asked about the rationale for a potential fourth regional treatment plant included as part of one of the Wastewater Treatment Actions. Presenters responded that future workshops will provide more detail on Actions to be explored as part of the Plan, including a potential fourth regional treatment plant. The potential of a fourth regional treatment plant is being explored based on proposed nitrogen regulations that are being considered by the Washington Department of Ecology, and King County's exploration of what

treatment plant investments may be needed to address these regulations. There has been no decision on this at this time.

- **Information for the public:** A participant asked whether the public will be provided with sufficient financial information to make an informed recommendation when asked to weigh in on Strategies. Presenters responded that information will be provided on the financial components of each Strategy, which may include cost of the Strategy, projected utility rates over a 40-year planning horizon, affordability impacts on low-income households, and potential options for rate relief and assistance to mitigate those rate increases.
- **Affordability:** A participant commented that it will be very important to keep in mind the impacts on ratepayers as we consider moving forward with planning billions of dollars of projects and programs and noted it will be important for environmental elements to be clearly defined. Presenters welcomed the comment and noted that feasibility, equity, homelessness, and when and where to make investments are all areas where input from this elected officials group, and the broader regional community, will be welcome.
- **Regional input:** A participant asked whether coordination has taken place between King County and other entities around the Salish Sea. Presenters responded that this is a consideration, as King County operates as the largest utility in the Salish Sea, and that the County's decisions are impactful to residents and local water quality in surrounding areas. The County is making efforts to coordinate with other utilities in the region.

Next steps

Post-briefing communications were shared between King County and the elected officials, which included a copy of the slides that were used during the briefing. The second and third workshops will take place on the following dates.

- Elected Officials Workshop #2: May 21, 1:30-3:30
 - Topic: Overview of Clean Water Plan Actions
- Elected Officials Workshop #3: June 11, 9:00-11:00
 - Topic: Overview of Clean Water Plan Evaluation Methodologies, including Financing and Affordability Analysis and Water Quality